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wherein the actuator element is one which includes a curved shape in an operating state in which a switching function of the switching device is not triggered, and is one which rests on a deflecting element with frictional engagement in such a way that the deflecting element exerts, on a concave inner side of the actuator element, a counterforce partially counteracting the curve of the actuator element.

2. (Amended) The device as claimed in claim 1, wherein the actuator element rests against the deflecting element approximately in a center of the deflecting element, between its two ends.

3. (Amended) The device as claimed in claim 1, wherein the actuator element is part of a current path and is heatable by an overcurrent above the temperature level bringing about the opening of the switching contact.

4. (Amended) The device as claimed in claim 1, wherein the actuator element is indirectly heatable.

5. (Amended) The device as claimed in claim 1, further comprising:  
a restoring spring, adapted to keep the actuator element in its curved shape in the operating state.

6. (Amended) The device as claimed in claim 1, wherein the actuator element is connected to the movable contact part electrically via a stranded wire and mechanically via a switching linkage.

7. (Amended) The device as claimed in claim 1, wherein the actuator element includes a shape memory alloy based on at least one of a NiTi and CuAl alloy.

*Please add the following new claims:*

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-- 8. The device as claimed in claim 1, wherein the actuator element is strip shaped.

9. The device as claimed in claim 2, wherein the actuator element is part of a current path and is heatable by an overcurrent above the temperature level bringing about the opening of the switching contact.

10. The device as claimed in claim 2, wherein the actuator element is indirectly heatable.

11. The device as claimed in claim 2, further comprising:  
a restoring spring, adapted to keep the actuator element in its curved shape in the operating state.

12. The device as claimed in claim 2, wherein the actuator element is connected to the movable contact part electrically via a stranded wire and mechanically via a switching linkage.

13. The device as claimed in claim 2, wherein the actuator element includes a shape memory alloy based on at least one of a NiTi and CuAl alloy.

14. The device as claimed in claim 6, wherein the actuator element includes a shape memory alloy based on at least one of a NiTi and CuAl alloy.

15. The device as claimed in claim 1, wherein the switching device is a circuit breaker.

16. An actuator element for a switching device, comprising:  
a shape memory alloy, into which an extended shape is impressed at an annealing temperature, the actuator element being connected to a movable contact part of a switching contact of the switching device and being curved in shape in an operating state in

which a switching function of the switching device is not triggered, wherein the actuator element is heatable above a temperature level to bring about an opening of the switching contact on the basis of a change in shape of the actuator element and wherein the actuator rests on a deflecting element with frictional engagement in such a way that the deflecting element exerts, on a concave inner side of the actuator element, a counterforce partially counteracting the curve of the actuator element.

17. The actuator element as claimed in claim 16, wherein the actuator element rests against the deflecting element approximately in a center of the deflecting element, between its two ends.

18. The actuator element as claimed in claim 16, wherein the actuator element is part of a current path and is heatable by an overcurrent above the temperature level bringing about the opening of the switching contact.

19. The actuator element as claimed in claim 16, wherein the actuator element is indirectly heatable.

20. The actuator element as claimed in claim 16, wherein the actuator element is connected to the movable contact part electrically via a stranded wire and mechanically via a switching linkage.

21. The actuator element as claimed in claim 16, wherein the actuator element includes a shape memory alloy based on at least one of a NiTi and CuAl alloy.

22. The actuator element as claimed in claim 16, wherein the actuator element is strip shaped.

23. A switching device, comprising:  
a switching contact;

an actuator element, connected to a movable contact part of the switching contact and being heatable above a temperature level to bring about an opening of the switching contact based upon a change in shape of the actuator element; and

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a deflecting element, wherein the actuator element is curved in shape in an operating state in which a switching function of the switching device is not triggered, and wherein the actuator rests on the deflecting element with frictional engagement in such a way that the deflecting element exerts, on a concave inner side of the actuator element, a counterforce partially counteracting the curve of the actuator element.

24. The device as claimed in claim 23, wherein the actuator element rests against the deflecting element approximately in a center of the deflecting element, between its two ends.

25. The device as claimed in claim 23, wherein the actuator element is part of a current path and is heatable by an overcurrent above the temperature level bringing about the opening of the switching contact.

26. The device as claimed in claim 23, wherein the actuator element is indirectly heatable.

27. The device as claimed in claim 23, further comprising:  
a restoring spring, adapted to keep the actuator element in its curved shape in the operating state.

28. The device as claimed in claim 23, wherein the actuator element is connected to the movable contact part electrically via a stranded wire and mechanically via a switching linkage.